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CAPITALISM: PUTTING PROFITS BEFORE PEOPLE

also: Greece

Child Poverty

Flaming Forests



socialist standard

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Introducing the Socialist Party

The Socialist Party is like no other political party in Britain. It is made up of people who have joined together because we want to get rid of the profit system and establish real socialism. Our aim is to persuade others to become socialist and act for themselves, organising democratically and without leaders, to bring about the kind of society that we are advocating in this journal. We are solely concerned with building a movement of socialists for socialism. We are not a reformist party with a programme of policies to patch up



capitalism.

We use every possible opportunity to make new socialists. We publish pamphlets and books, as well as CDs, DVDs and various other informative material. We also give talks and take part in debates; attend rallies, meetings and demos; run educational conferences; host internet discussion forums, make films presenting our ideas, and contest elections when practical. Socialist literature is available in Arabic, Bengali, Dutch, Esperanto, French, German, Italian, Polish, Spanish, Swedish and Turkish as well as English.

The more of you who join the Socialist Party the more we will be able to get our ideas across, the more experiences we will be able to draw on and greater will be the new ideas for building the movement which you will be able to bring us.

The Socialist Party is an organisation of equals. There is no leader and there are no followers. So, if you are going to join we want you to be sure that you agree fully with what we stand for and that we are satisfied that you understand the case for socialism.

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Editorial

Deal or No Deal?

THERESA MAY called the election to try to get a parliament more compliant to the sort of Brexit her government wanted – No to the single market, No to the customs union, No to the Court of Justice, a stand-alone Britain on the capitalist world stage. In the event she failed miserably and got an even less compliant parliament.

Sensing her weakened position, those elements within the capitalist class opposed to her idea of Brexit – which is most of them – together with their political and media representatives have taken the offensive and are pushing for a much less radical Brexit – leaving the political aspects of the EU but retaining as many of the economic ones as can be.

This makes economic sense from their point of view; which is why they supported joining and remaining in the EU. Being a member of the customs union means no tariffs on goods exported to other EU countries and, also, given the EU's size, more collective clout in trade negotiations with third-party countries and other trading blocs. The

single market takes things further and has already made considerable progress in removing non-tariff barriers to inter-EU trade, such as different standards.

Even some die-hard opponents of the EU, who did so much to stir up xenophobia during the referendum campaign, are now hinting that, after Britain officially withdraws from the EU in 2019, they might accept transitional arrangements allowing Britain to stay in the customs union and single market for a period while full withdrawal from them is prepared. They even seem ready to countenance, during this period, some payments to the EU and some role for the European Court of Justice.

Capitalist reality seems to have struck them. No more bluster and bluff about Britain regaining its 'independence' in March 2019. No more talk of 'no deal being better than a bad deal'. Now, apparently, as they contemplate the economic (and, in the case of Northern Ireland, political) consequences of tariff barriers and customs posts going up on 'independence day' if there's no deal,

even a bad deal (from their point of view) is considered better.

There will be a deal of some sort, even one which could leave things much as they are. It will certainly leave capitalism much as it is, as a system of production for profit based on the exclusion of the majority from ownership and control of the means of production with all the problems this causes for the excluded majority and for humanity in general.

Only capitalist interests are at stake in negotiations over trading arrangements between British capitalism, the EU and the rest of the world. Leave those whose interests are at stake to get on with it. It's their business not ours. Meanwhile as socialists we will continue to campaign for capitalism as a world system to be replaced by a world of common ownership and democratic control with production for use not profit.

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Global Warning Fatigue

PROFESSOR STEPHEN Hawking, darling of the physics community, seems of late determined to tell us that we're heading to hell in a handcart: 'Space travel may be the only thing that saves us from ourselves. I am convinced that humans need to leave Earth' (phys.org/news/2017-07). In recent years the professor has repeatedly offered Cassandra-like prophecies of impending global destruction, as if he's auditioning for the part of Private Frazer in *Dad's Army*: 'We're doomed, I tell ye, DOOMED'.

No doubt Prof Hawking assumes, as does every reasonable teacher, parent and political activist, that dire warnings are what make us act to change things. But what is the evidence for this assumption? If the people who elected Donald Trump are anything to go by, dire warnings may have precisely the opposite effect.

It is already known that confronting a world view with contradictory facts can perversely help reinforce it, a phenomenon known as the backfire effect [scientificamerican.com/article/how-to-convince-someone-when-facts-fail/]. It is possible that a diet of relentlessly negative news has a similar effect, so that instead of motivating change it is more likely to disable, depress and demotivate us into apathy and torpor.

There's no question that bad news sells. Humans have a well-documented negativity bias which makes us take notice of bad news more than good, in the same way that we fear loss more than we covet gain. Explanations vary, though the simple logic of evolutionary survival may suffice. We devote less attention to earning dinner than we do to avoiding becoming dinner.

But our bad news bias is arguably being overloaded by a news media diet composed almost entirely of the stuff. It's not just that there is a lot of bad news out there. News media, in hot competition for attention, preferentially select it. For example, one study looking at how news media treated various reports from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change noted that the report detailing the threats received around three times the coverage of the report dealing with practical solutions. If this is supposed to encourage us, indications are that it doesn't. A small study of news-reading habits across the US, UK and India identified 'news fatigue' among participants leading to a 'hope gap' which created a desire to 'tune out'. As the study authors put it: 'Perceived threat without efficacy of response is usually a recipe for disengagement or fatalism' (solutionsjournalism.org/news-negativity-bias-research-says/).

Journalists themselves are not immune either, and those exposed in the newsroom to extreme images or footage of violence have been known to develop PTSD symptoms including anxiety, depression, physical distress and alcoholism (www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/02/19/violent-media-anxiety_n_6671732.html).

Perhaps it's not surprising that some commentators advise us to stop following the news altogether, on the grounds that it doesn't explain anything, its fragmentary nature inhibits concentration, it doesn't help you make practical decisions, it grinds you down into a state of desensitised cynicism and passivity, and then it helps lock you into this worldview through your own confirmation bias. Swiss writer Rolf Dobelli is an exponent of this view, arguing that news is not information for the mind, it's a toxic diet of sugary tidbits that corrodes your ability to think straight (theguardian.com/media/2013/apr/12/news-is-bad-rolf-dobelli).

But what about bad news leavened with good? The order of presentation might be important. One interesting 2014 workplace study looked at how people react to receiving good news before bad, and vice versa. The researchers reported that participants who elected to hear bad news first, followed by good, tended to display less anxiety and better moods as a result, but proved to be less interested in doing anything about the bad news. Conversely, those who chose to get the good news first tended to be more motivated to take positive action to address the issues that had been identified (psychologytoday.com/blog/ulterior-motives/201406/why-hearing-good-news-or-bad-news-first-really-matters).

And there are different types of motivation at work. Research into workplace motivation since the 1950s has shown that while demotivating factors tend to be external and environmental – bad pay, stupid boss etc – correcting for these factors – even offering more money – does not by itself increase motivation. Instead, successful motivators tend to be intrinsic and to do with a need for interesting and challenging work with increased responsibility. Yet despite this managers continue to rely on the external 'carrot and stick' motivators (www.psychologytoday.com/blog/wired-success/201311/carrot-and-stick-motivation-revisited-new-research). This won't come as a surprise to anyone who understands that employment is essentially an exploitative practice devoted to making a profit for the boss, in which such intrinsic motivators can rarely if ever be accommodated.

Today it's possible, through techniques such as blood oxygenation level dependent (BOLD) imaging, to study the processes of memory formation and its motivational drivers directly in the brain. This is useful because self-reporting is notoriously unreliable. One conclusion is unequivocal: 'you can't be afraid, you can't be anxious—because anxiety systems really clamp down on curiosity and produce stereotyped, rapid, simple responses that short circuit [...] curiosity'. The research has also turned up some surprises. Not only do people react very differently to the same reward stimuli – 'some people responded like we were threatening them with an electric shock when we promised them money' – there is also a wide variation in why and what people remember – 'if we alter the motivational state of the brain, we see that emotion and motivation are not just filtering memory to say what's remembered and what's not. They also shape the structure, the form of the memories, to enhance behavioral responses (dana.org/Briefing_Papers/A_Study_of_Motivation/).

It's not that a bad or negative message never engenders positive change, indeed evidence that it can work was behind the move to place graphic and disturbing images on cigarette packets (newscientist.com/article/dn20634-gruesome-pictures-can-get-the-us-to-quit-smoking/). But while a promotional strategy aimed at a specific behaviour is one thing, an unrelenting barrage of negativity may be something else entirely.

How should socialists respond? The case for socialism is really two cases, one negative and one positive. The negative case, which we tend to focus more attention on, is the case against capitalism and in particular why the system can never work in the majority interest *no matter what anyone does*. The positive case is for the post-capitalist society, where common ownership, universal democracy, voluntary participation, free access and production for use can create a steady-state and technologically advanced society which is capable of benefiting all its citizens. The negative case, or some bowdlerised version of it, is what people hear *ad nauseam* from every two-bit leftist demagogue and career politician. The positive case meanwhile is spat upon as 'utopian' by those who are too befuddled to think straight or too embittered to care. Socialists are free to choose either case. But there are grounds for thinking that it's hope that really drives change, and not despair.

PJS

Child Poverty: Not Just Being Poor

CHILD POVERTY in Britain is at its highest level since 2010 (Guardian 16 March). Around 100,000 children fell into relative poverty in 2015–6, and four million children, around thirty percent, are classed as poor. The head of Oxfam's UK programme was quoted as saying, 'There are now more people in poverty in the UK than there have been for almost 20 years and a million more than at the beginning of the decade.' Nearly half of children growing up in single-parent households are poor, while two-thirds of children in poverty are in households with at least one parent who is in work.

Poverty for children does not just mean going without possessions, living in sub-standard housing, not having a proper holiday. Mere survival is an issue too: in So You Think You Know about Britain?, Danny Dorling observes that infant mortality in London can depend on whether a child is born in a wealthier or poorer area. He also notes that one cemetery in Bradford has eight times as many recent graves of infants and children as the equivalent cemetery near Hampstead in London. There are many factors involved in deaths at a very young age, including pre-term births, weight at birth and mother's age and health, but poverty is clearly involved as well (and may be connected to some of these other causes).

Fatal injuries of various kinds are also

There is fairly strong evidence for the effect of poverty on educational attainment



correlated with poverty: 'a child from the lowest social class in the United Kingdom is 16 times more likely to die in a house fire than one from a wealthy family' (World Health Organisation report, Injuries and Violence, 2014).

In 2010 a government review of health inequalities in England, Fair Society, Healthy Lives, presented as its main recommendation 'Give every child the best start in life'. They noted that children with low 'cognitive scores' at 22 months but who come from better-off families increase their scores by the age of ten. But children with high cognitive scores at 22 months who come from badly-off families have lower scores by age ten. There may well be reservations about just what is being measured here, but the existence of some relation between economic status and educational achievement seems highly likely. This will then feed in to the qualifications gained, the jobs followed and so to health and life expectancy.

There is in fact other fairly strong evidence for the effect of poverty on educational attainment. For instance, as a

proportion just over half as many children in receipt of free school meals gain top grades in GCSE as children in the whole population. It is often claimed that poorer parents have lower aspirations for their children, but this seems in fact not to be the case, with the same (and very high) proportion of parents of seven-year-olds wanting their children to attend university, irrespective of their own status as poor or non-poor. Parents' own education is a better predictor than income of how well their children will do at school, but this does not mean that income plays no role.

A child from the lowest social class in the UK is 16 times more likely to die in a house fire than one from a wealthy family

In February the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health produced a comprehensive report State of Child Health, which, among other topics, examined the links between health and poverty among children. Infant mortality, as we have seen, was correlated with living in a low-income household, as also were the risk of tooth decay or dying in an accident or developing a chronic condition such as asthma. The report also noted that many effects of childhood ill-health can continue into adulthood:

'the risk of death in adulthood increases for many conditions including coronary heart disease, respiratory disease, injuries, and cancer. In addition, mental health conditions in childhood are more likely to persist into adulthood.'

Giving every child the best start in life is a fine principle, but one hard to put into practice in a society riven with inequality and privilege.

PB

Russia 1917: as we saw it

By the time the piece on General Korniloff was published, he had staged, in August, a failed putsch to overthrow Kerensky who by then was Prime Minister.

The tit-bits that appear in the newspapers here regarding Russia and the revolution are of a very contradictory nature. However, some very interesting quotations do occasionally creep into the columns of the Press, as instance the following:

‘The organ of the Council of Soldiers and Workmen’s Delegates, after quoting two English newspapers to the effect that the declaration of the Provisional Government and the pronouncements of the revolutionary leaders show that the Russian peace formula coincides with the British and French war aims, says:

“You are deceiving yourselves, gentlemen, or, rather, you are vainly striving to delude your fellow-countrymen concerning the real policy of the Russian revolution. The revolution

will not sacrifice a single soldier to help you repair “historic injustices” committed against you. What about the “historic injustices” committed by yourselves and your violent oppression of Ireland, India, Egypt, and innumerable peoples inhabiting all the continents of the world? If you are so anxious for ‘justice’ that you are prepared, in its name, to send millions of people to the grave, then, gentlemen, begin with yourselves.”—Daily News, May 30th, 1917.

After well chewing this delectable morsel I can quite conceive the need for sending the decoy ducks, Thorne, Henderson & Co., to Petrograd to counteract this rather frank statement of Russian opinion concerning the aspirations of their British and French Allies. Ireland, India, and Egypt! A hit, a palpable hit, my masters! (Socialist Standard, July 1917)

‘Quite recently one of the regiments of Siberian Rifles, which had fought so splendidly at the beginning of the revolution, abandoned the Riga front, and nothing else but the order to exterminate the whole regiment availed

to make it return to its positions’ — (General Korniloff, Russian Commander-in-Chief, at the Moscow Conference).

A side-light, this, on the way “heroes” are made. Had these men stood out against the order of “Comrade” Kerensky’s colleague in butchery and been exterminated, the world’s skunk Press would have been howling “cowards! traitors!” over their reeking corpses. But they chose the un-heroic part, and so will yet become “heroes” and “high-souled patriots,” “going into battle with joy,” and “making the great sacrifice” for Holy Russia. So it is in all countries. Apart from individuals, the highest courage is to be found farthest back from the trenches. It reaches a high level at “Staff Headquarters,” where ornamental soldiers of blood “win their spurs” without losing their lives, and it reaches sublimity as far back as Fleet Street and the Cabinet chamber. But the nearer the front it is the more it has to be manufactured by making the soldier more afraid of his own tyrants than of the “enemy”.

(Socialist Standard, September 1917).



Capitalism and Property

WHEN JEREMY Corbyn proposed that the survivors of the Grenfell Tower massacre should be housed in nearby empty luxury properties he was expressing a thought that will have occurred to many others. The Times (16 June) reported it under the front-page headline ‘Corbyn: seize properties of the rich for Grenfell homeless’ and wheeled out a Tory backwoodsman, Andrew Bridgen, MP, to say of Corbyn’s suggestion that

‘calls to requisition private property when there is empty student accommodation available locally fits in with his hard Marxist views where all private property should belong to the state.’

Where to begin?

First, Corbyn doesn’t claim to be a Marxist, not even a ‘soft’ one.

Second, while Marx did speak of the ‘Abolition of Private Property’ he meant only of the means of wealth production, not of personal possessions. As he and Engels wrote in The Communist Manifesto:

‘The distinguishing feature of Communism is not the abolition of property generally, but the abolition of bourgeois property. But modern bourgeois private property is the final and most complete expression of the system of producing and appropriating products, that is based on class antagonisms, on the exploitation of the many by the few. In this sense, the theory of the Communists may be summed up in the single sentence: Abolition of private property.’

In the last-but-one chapter of Volume I of Capital, on ‘The Historical Tendency of Capitalist Accumulation’, Marx wrote that the negation of capitalist private property will be the restoration of ‘individual property’ in the sense of the access by individual producers to the fruits of their collective work:

‘The capitalist mode of appropriation, the result of the capitalist mode of production, produces capitalist private property. This is the first negation of individual private property, as founded on the labour of the proprietor. But capitalist production begets, with the inexorability of a law of Nature, its own negation. This does not re-establish private property for the producer, but gives him individual property based on the acquisition of the capitalist era: i.e., on cooperation and the possession in common of the land and of

the means of production.’

Third, Marx did not call for everything to belong to the state as he envisaged that the state, as the public power of coercion needed in a class-divided society would disappear once the means of production had ceased to be privately owned (including state ownership which is still ‘private’ ownership as it is ownership by section only of society); its place would be taken by unarmed, democratically-controlled administrative centres. There would not be state ownership but the ‘possession in common of the land and means of production’; these would belong to everyone and no one and would simply be there to be used, under democratic control, to turn out what people needed both as individuals and as a community.

It is the capitalist state, representing the general interest of a country’s capitalist class, that has wide powers to seize property. It could, if it so chose, do what Corbyn suggested, but is very unlikely to do so as this wouldn’t be in the vital interest of the capitalist class as a whole. When this interest is involved then the capitalist state can be ruthless, as when they requisitioned the Chagos Islands in the Indian Ocean and deported the whole population to clear them for a US military base. An example of hard capitalist state requisition if ever there was one.



Working For Jeremy

IT WAS last September that Theresa May spoke out on the matter of her feeling strong and stable in her place at Ten Downing Street: ‘I think the next election will be in 2020. I’m not going to be calling a snap election’. At the time she had a majority in the House of Commons and the Labour opposition under Jeremy Corbyn was in such disarray that it was usual for the more boisterous Tory benches to show how exultantly they despised him in guffaws of ‘More!... More!...’ each time he sat down after speaking. Meanwhile one Labour MP had rated Corbyn’s performance in Prime Ministers Questions as ‘a fucking disaster’ – an opinion which, perhaps similarly worded, was crudely popular on the opposition benches. Except that in May the Prime Minister announced that she had changed her mind so there would be an election on 8 June. And when that day came, after the votes had been counted and all those Tory MPs had been voted out, there been such a change among the Labour ranks that Corbyn was welcomed by them with enthusiastic applause as a victor, which carried him onto the Front Bench wreathed in smiles.

Shipyard Language

That assessment of Corbyn and PMQ came from John Woodcock, the MP for Barrow In Furness where employment is heavily dependent on the production of those Trident nuclear submarines which Corbyn opposes. Woodcock thinks that under Corbyn the party is, to use again what might be called shipyard language, ‘fucked’. In the Labour leadership election he voted for Liz Kendall – possibly under the impression that Corbyn was not a serious candidate, but perhaps his knowledge of the electoral process is not as penetrating as he would like it to be; his majority in general elections has fallen from 5,208 in 2010 to 209 in 2017. Elsewhere, on the fringes of Parliament, the language was less manipulative but equally forceful for its doubts about where Corbyn stood on the issue of the European Union. For example the book *All Out War* by Tim Shipman, the political editor of the *Sunday Times*, claims to provide something of a ‘ringside seat’ on the decision-making processes at work during these tumultuous times. Overall, Corbyn does not feature as one of the more dynamic, demanding influences at work for change because he ‘... had no experience of top-level politics until he won the Labour leadership in

September 2015’. There is reference to a ‘lacklustre performance’ in the matter of the continuing membership of British capitalism in the EU; his ‘...behaviour stoked bemused irritation among his colleagues..’ Another, but similar, view from the political side came from ex-Shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer Ed



Balls; ‘If I’d still been in Parliament, I don’t think I could have served in Jeremy’s Shadow Cabinet; not because I believe in sulking in tents, but because it would have been impossible to serve in any kind of senior position if I had fundamental disagreements with the leadership on core policy issues, and I suspect there would have been many’.

De Piero

The matter of whether that would have been good or bad for the Labour government was complicated by the various talents on offer. Consider for example Gloria De Piero, from a family originating in Italy but afflicted with severe and persistent impoverishment because neither parent was healthy enough to hold onto paid employment. But De Piero plugged on through all the stresses, achieving some handsomely relevant qualifications which were enough to carry her into a career in TV journalism with the likes of Jonathan Dimbleby and then into politics. In February 2010 she resigned from GMTV to try for the Labour nomination for the Ashfield seat where the sitting MP Geoff Hoon was stepping down after a varied career including a number of ministerial posts entailing predictable

ambitions for the party leadership. But this was not all plain sailing, for Hoon was involved in a series of blunders and worse which eventually earned him the title of Geoff Buffoon. Whatever his defence in these matters it was clearly time for him to give way to a less contentious candidate and De Piero stood out for this. One outcome was that in her first attempt at the seat, in 2010, De Piero had a majority of 192 (compared to Hoon’s 2005 figure of 10,213) resulting from a swing of 17.2 percent to the Liberal candidate Jason Zadrozny – which was quickly wiped out in time for the next election in 2015 after Zadrozny was prosecuted for sexual offences.

Topless

However De Piero was not influenced by the stresses, the questions, the doubts about being a Labour candidate. At some stage – when she was 15 years old – she had been persuaded into posing for some topless photographs. The matter remained dormant until 2010, when it was reported in *The Mail On Sunday* which had bought the photos and again in October 2013 when a news agency was attempting to buy them. De Piero’s protests were supported by a former Tory MP describing the matter as a ‘...quasi-sexual or moralistic assault on her behaviour as a 15-year old girl’ and at De Piero’s request the newspaper sent her the photos and the negatives with a written apology. Now she is more experienced; in July last year she demonstrated the assumed influence of a Front Bencher by contributing a piece to *The Sun* which was ‘begging’ that paper’s readers to join the Labour Party so that they could vote for ‘...a leader who recognises that the Labour Party was founded to be a Party of Government’. A year later she had changed her mind to such an extent that she had been able to accept a place in Corbyn’s team in the vital job of Shadow Justice Minister. Gloria De Piero is not the only Labour MP to change their mind over accepting the temptation to work with Jeremy Corbyn. Roberta Blackman-Woods (‘I no longer have confidence in you as a leader’) is one. Another is Karl Turner (‘I’ve eaten humble pie over criticisms of Jeremy Corbyn’). And Holly Lynch (‘An ineffective Leader’). This fact informs us, and strengthens us, in our opposition to the people who are elected to rule over us in a social system which is essentially, inhumanely, chaotic.

IVAN

9

GRENFELL TOWER WARNINGS IGNORED AND MONEY SAVED REGULATIONS PUT COST BEFORE SAFETY

(Headline, New York Times, 24 June)



The provision of ‘social housing’ constitutes a charge on the profits of the class of owners whose interests must prevail while class divisions persist. It is this fact that should be borne in mind in any analysis of the wider issues behind the immediate causes of the Grenfell Tower disaster.

In 1999 a House of Commons All Party Select Committee considered the risks involved in the use of cladding in the five hundred tall buildings in which it had been applied. They reported that they thought that all external cladding systems should be required either to be entirely non-combustible or to be proven by testing not to pose an unacceptable risk in terms of fire spread. The actions they recommended should in their view be applied to old as well as new buildings and they concluded that:

‘...we do not believe that it should take a serious fire in which many people are killed before all reasonable steps are taken towards minimising the risks. The evidence we have received strongly suggests that the small-scale tests which are currently used to determine the fire safety of external cladding systems are not fully effective in evaluating their performance in a ‘live’ fire situation’

(First Report of the Select Committee on Potential Risk of Fire Spread in Buildings via External Cladding Systems, 14 July 1999 - <https://tinyurl.com/y92b7kjr>, emphasis added).

The responsible government department replied agreeing with most of what the committee had recommended but could not ‘find the Parliamentary time’ to legislate and put the recommendations into force.

Note here the use of that innocent sounding phrase ‘all reasonable steps.’ ‘Reasonable’ really means that which is not too costly, that which does not bite too deeply into the profit-making system as a whole. All local authorities are constrained by that overarching necessity. The decision-making process in capitalism takes place within this framework – the often unasked question being: ‘Is the price of putting this problem right less or greater than leaving things as they are?’

The other highly political question concerns how little can those who control society spend in their attempt to have the system run smoothly and with the minimum of interruption. One factor that has received more than unusual attention following 14 June is the apparent loss of confidence in authority. While the upper echelons of the power structure of the Kensington and Chelsea Borough Council were seen as completely ineffective large numbers of ‘ordinary people’ (i.e. the ones that actually do run society from top to bottom) came forward and, in the absence of any emergency plan, provided comfort and relief to the victims.

The management of Kensington and Chelsea’s housing stock is delegated to Kensington and Chelsea Tenant Management Organisation (KCTMO) who are monitored by the Housing Department. Their performance during 2015/16 was commended in the Annual Review as there has been considerable success in meeting the agreed targets set. The Grenfell Tower ‘regeneration’ project had generated an income of just over £3.1m from commercial rents in 2015/16. Health and safety continued to be delivered, thus

‘...enabling the Council to meet its statutory duties and strategic aims...[and]... the pro-active asset management ensures that the Borough’s stock, both residential and

commercial, is being maximized in terms of use and rental income...’ (Kensington and Chelsea Tenant Management Organisation Performance Review 2015/16, Laura Johnson, Director of Housing - <http://tinyurl.com/ycdg9pkw>, emphasis added).

Compliance with health and safety legislation, the review stated, continued to protect residents ensuring that the Borough ‘...continues to provide quality housing services *within the resources available*’ (emphasis added). <http://tinyurl.com/ycdg9pkw>

This overly optimistic view of the workings of KCTMO should be compared with the views of conditions at Grenfell Tower where tenants were struggling with their landlords to bring safety measures back to acceptable standards. They were so incensed with the indifference and lack of concern of KCTMO that they posted several reports highlighting the dangerous conditions at the tower in an attempt at redress. This is from their blog posted on 20 November 2016:

‘It is a truly terrifying thought but the Grenfell Action Group firmly believe that only a catastrophic event will expose the ineptitude and incompetence of our landlord, the KCTMO, and bring an end to the dangerous living conditions and neglect of health and safety legislation that they inflict upon their tenants and leaseholders.

‘Unfortunately, the Grenfell Action Group have reached the conclusion that only an incident that results in serious loss of life of KCTMO residents will allow the external scrutiny to occur that will shine a light on the practices that characterise the malign governance of this non-functioning organisation’ (<https://grenfellactiongroup.wordpress.com/2016/11/20/kctmo-playing-with-fire>).

The Council’s response was to threaten legal action.

Kensington and Chelsea Council are not beyond pleading poverty when it suits their purpose, but at the time of the catastrophic fire they were managing a budget surplus of £274m (Independent, 30 June) and had recently been urging cost-cutting measures on the companies undertaking the refurbishment of Grenfell Tower. The original quote for the whole project came to £9.2m; the price after the implementation of a cheeseparating exercise was £8.7m. A large slice of the savings came at the behest of KCTMO’s project manager eager to please the chairman of Kensington and Chelsea housing committee. He urgently emailed the contractors that ‘We need good costs for Cllr Feilding-Mellen and the planner tomorrow’ (Guardian, 30 June).

The savings were made by the simple expedient of choosing cheaper, inherently less safe because more flammable material with which to clad the building. The dangers inherent in this practice are well-recognised in the building industry. In 2014 the Fire Protection Research Foundation had recorded twenty major fires in tall buildings worldwide. In twelve cases cladding similar to that used in Grenfell Tower was involved in spreading the flames. Subsequent testing of 149 tower blocks across forty-five local authorities resulted in a staggering failure rate of one hundred percent.

The savings to the Council’s budget condemned eighty people to death in a building with no sprinklers, faulty alarm systems, and inadequate means of escape.

GWYNN THOMAS

Blame the system

The government has set up an enquiry headed by a retired High Court judge to examine the circumstances behind the Grenfell Tower massacre. No doubt he will end up blaming some individuals and a few heads will roll but we can already identify the culprit – it’s the capitalist system of production for profit.

Grenfell Tower was ‘social housing’ as housing for the poor is called these days so, in any event, standards were not going to be high. This was compounded by the fact that capitalism went into a slump in 2008/9, obliging the government to cut back on its spending with a view to reducing taxation on profits.

This began at national level with the government deciding to slash spending on everything in sight. As local government gets most of its money from central government, its funding was slashed and local councils had to cut their spending too. Spending on old people’s homes and outings, day care centres, play groups and playgrounds, even street lighting and waste collection was cut – and also on the maintenance of council-owned properties.

Some reformists urged councillors to refuse to do this but councillors everywhere – whether Tory, Labour, Liberal, Nationalist or whatever – took the view that there was no alternative. In fact there wasn’t. Or, rather, the one that there was would have been just as bad. A refusal to cut council spending by setting an illegal budget would have resulted in the council being suspended and the central government sending in commissioners to do the job instead. Either way, the capitalist economy’s edict to cut spending to save profits would have been implemented.

Grenfell Tower used to be council housing but had been hived off to a ‘tenant management organisation’ – an organisation to manage tenants, that is, not one managed by them – but which was still responsible to the local council even if at ‘arms length’. So, when it came to spending on the building it was the council that had to find the money. Given the cutback in central government funding, the council had no choice but to choose the cheapest option, even if it involved cutting corners. Building contractors and sub-contractors, eager to make a profit out of council business, sought to pare costs even further.

The investigating judge will no doubt find some councillors, council officials and building contractors to blame, and individuals will be named, shamed and maybe even prosecuted. But we can be equally sure that no Cabinet minister will be named even though the Cabinet and the Chancellor of the Exchequer in particular took the decision to cut funding for local government. But blaming individuals will be unfair as they were only working within the limits imposed by capitalism and so making the best of a bad job. Even the members of the Cabinet cannot be blamed personally as they too were only carrying out the dictates of the capitalist economy to put saving profits before spending to meet people’s needs.

What Labour Governments End Up Doing: A Reminder

As many seem to imagine that a Labour government under Corbyn could be different, we reprint an article on the 1964-70 Wilson Labour government. Since there is an even smaller state-capitalist sector now than in those days, Lord Lever's comments towards the end are even more pertinent. At the end, just substitute "Corbyn" for "Kinnock".

'As in all recent elections ... [the Labour Party] played down any claim to stand, as a socialist party, for a radically different form of society ... it asked the voters to say that it could administer the mixed economy and welfare state better than the Conservatives'.

No, this is not David Butler's comment on the next year's general election but on that of 1959. In the event, the voters



Harold Wilson

judged that the Tories could run capitalism better than Labour. But after a further five years of Tory rule they changed their minds and in October 1964 a Labour government under Harold Wilson came into office.

The 1964 Wilson government was elected on a programme of ending the 'stop-go' of what they called 'Thirteen Years of Tory Misrule'. This was a reference to what happened every four or five years during the 50s and 60s when a boom led to a balance of payments crisis by sucking in imports, to which the government responded by measures to damp down demand. Actually this was a reflection, at the level of government policy, of the minor cycles that capitalism continued to go through during the prolonged period of capitalist expansion that followed the war. In any event, Labour promised to replace 'stop-go' by "planned and sustained economic growth".

A Labour government, George Brown had declared in January 1963, would cure unemployment 'instantly' (Observer, 27 January 1963). James Callaghan explained how in more detail:

'Our first priority will be to make British industry GO, and to make it efficient. We shall ask industrialists, trade unionists, and economists at all levels to help us create a National Industrial Development Plan. This plan will set expanding targets for industry; will collect and analyse information about costs, export possibilities, profit margins; and will reconcile production with demand ... The plan will aim for a large increase in the output of our factories each year—produced more efficiently than before' (Daily Sketch, 11 February 1963).

After Labour's victory in October of the following year,

Brown became Minister of Economic Affairs and Callaghan Chancellor of the Exchequer. Ray Gunther, a former leader of the railway clerks union, was appointed Minister of Labour, Brown's job was to draw up the promised National Plan; which he duly did, unveiling at a ceremony in September 1965. It provided for total output to rise by 25 percent by 1970, a growth rate twice as fast as the one percent a year that had taken place under the Tories.

The plan never got off the ground. As early as November 1964 a balance of payments crisis developed with a run on sterling. By July 1965 this had become so serious that Callaghan was forced to curb government spending. After announcing cuts in existing expenditure, he went on 'we shall also have to defer some of the desirable social reforms we had hoped to do in the immediate future' (Times, 28 July 1965). Although Labour won an increased majority in the election held in March 1966, in November 1967 they were forced to devalue the pound and impose even tougher austerity; prescription charges which they had abolished on coming to power were restored at a higher rate. And growth never did attain anything near the planned 4 percent. Contemporary newspaper headlines tell their own story:

Mr Gunther Condemns Dock Move by Strikers (Times, 20 October 1964)

Wilson Warns of More Tough and Unpopular Measures Ahead (Sunday Times, 24 February 1965)

Wilson's TV Attack on Clock-Watching (Telegraph, 25 February 1965)

Britain's Attitudes Outdated—Premier. Country "cannot afford strikes" (Guardian, 25 February 1965)

Profit Motive as Test of Efficiency. Mr Brown's Reply to Directors. "Government Not Anti-Business" (Times, 22 May 1965)



George Brown

Wilson Hits at Rail Go-Slow (Observer, 18 July 1965)

Spending Cut to Suit Nation's Pocket. Chancellor Curbs Council Mortgages, HP, Building. £100m of Defence Next Year: Social Reforms Deferred (Times, 28 July 1965)

"Squeeze" Delays School Building Six Months (Telegraph, 26 August 1965)

Brown Wants Strong Powers to Back Incomes Policy (Financial Times, 21 December 1965)

Wage Restraint Vital in 1966—Premier (Financial Times, 1 January 1966)

Folly To Press For Big Wage Rises—Chancellor (Financial Times, 18 May 1966)

Sackings Better Than Short-Time, Says Gunther (Sunday Telegraph, 18 September 1966)

Ministers Hint At Permanent Pay Curb (Observer, 18 September 1966)

Government Embraces Profitability (Guardian, 23 November 1966)

Local Authority Spending Must be Cut—Greenwood (Financial Times, 21 December 1966)

Government Justified in Demanding Sacrifices—PM (Financial Times, 1 May 1966)

Hint of Change in Social Aid. Mr Gunther on "Means Test" (Times, 21 August 1967)

Emergency Powers Ready (Financial Times, 21 October 1967)

Prescription Charges Essential—Crossman (Financial Times, 29 January 1968)

Standard of Living "Must Fall". Mr Gunther on Last Chance (Times, 29 March 1968)

By 1970 the working class had had enough and Labour was booted out. By its own standards the Wilson Labour government of 1964-70 was an utter failure. It didn't deliver sustained growth and social progress; instead it ended up restraining wages and cutting social services, and it left office with unemployment at its highest for thirty years.

Why do Labour governments fail this way? The first thing to notice is that there is nothing special about Labour governments in this respect. Tory governments do the same. In fact all governments do. It is just that Labour's failures are more resounding in that the Labour Party was formed as a trade union party committed to trying to improve conditions for the working class while nobody expects the Tories, as the party of the ruling class and the rich, to behave any differently.



James Callaghan

Dismal record

The basic reason for the failure of the Wilson government's attempt to plan a steady expansion of output, so as to keep unemployment down and provide expanding social services, was that his government was a government of capitalism, and capitalism is a profit-making system under which what and how much is produced is determined by considerations of relatively short-term profitability. Ministers and civil servants may draw up grandiose plans for a steady expansion of production, but those in charge of firms react to market conditions not paper plans. If, as happened under Wilson in

the 60s, they judge that they will not be able to sell the extra output at a profit then they won't produce it.

Labour has only ever challenged capitalism verbally, and then only sparingly. In practice, when in power, it has always accepted capitalism and capitalism's economic priorities: that, since capitalism runs on profits, profits must be allowed to be made, and must be maintained if necessary at the expense of wages and salaries

A number of Labour leaders have been quite open about this. Harold Lever, then an MP (now he's a Lord) and chairman of the Labour Party's economic and financial committee and later a cabinet Minister, writing just after Labour had won the 1966 election, declared in terms which the present leaders of the Labour Party would wholeheartedly endorse:

'Labour's economic plans are not in any way geared to nationalisation; they are directed towards increased production on the basis of the continued existence of a large private sector. Within the terms of a profit system it is not



Jeremy Corbyn

possible, in the long run, to achieve sustained increases in output without an adequate flow of profit to promote and finance them. The Labour leadership knows as well as any businessman that an engine which runs on profit cannot be made to move faster without extra fuel. So, though profits may be squeezed temporarily by taxation and Government price policy, they must and will, over a longer period, increase significantly even if not proportionately to increased production' (Observer, 3 April 1966).

Since profits are needed to fuel the engine of capitalism, one of the tasks of any (and every) government of capitalism is to ensure that the flow of profits is not threatened by strikes and wage demands. In short, one of the jobs of managing capitalism is to try to ensure that the working class does not demand, and does not get, too much. This is why Labour governments, as managers of capitalism, always end up attacking the working class in the same way as the Tories do.

Whenever profits have been threatened, as by a failure of exports to sell well enough or by an economic downturn, Labour governments have reacted by restraining and freezing wages and by postponing and cutting back on social reforms. This is not because they are incompetent or dishonest or traitors but because that is what managing capitalism involves. Anybody who takes on this responsibility has to do this, just as Wilson had to and as Kinnock will if ever he gets the chance.

(Socialist Standard, December 1991)

GREECE: the road to Bailoutistan

In his new book, *Adults in the Room: My Battle with Europe's Deep Establishment*, Yanis Varoufakis sets out to portray himself as the political outsider who more than spoke truth to power: he stood up to power, and earned its scorn. He details his period as the Greek Minister of Finance as he tried to negotiate a write-down on Greece's unsustainable debt, and an end to the practice of extend and pretend: his characterisation of the previous two bailouts from the European Central Bank, European Commission and the International Monetary Fund (known collectively as the Troika) which gave Greece more debt, turned it into a debtor colony (he names it Bailoutistan), and pretended that it could ever hope to pay the debt back.

Throughout, though, he reveals himself as a form of insider, a member of the international financial and academic set, with 'good friends' in major institutions throughout the world, including Lord Norman Lamont. He even had prior form working as an advisor for PASOK, the leftist Greek party that held political hegemony there for so long. He was, however, not a member of Syriza, and not part of the Eurogroup club of time-served politicians.

Like most politicians' memoirs, though, he does go out of his way on point-scoring and dredging up old wounds. He claims Alexis Tsipras went and learnt to speak English on his advice; he recounts the reason why he turned up on British news in a tight couture shirt (he was travelling at

short notice, and an aide was sent to buy him a shirt as he had no luggage); a vital document was not sent to the Eurogroup in time to be considered, and apparently this was deliberate political sabotage by a rival he claims was in hock to the Greek oligarchs.

The biggest betrayal was he says was that of Tsipras: they had an express agreement, Varoufakis claims, that they would stay the course. He gives us the game theory behind his strategy with the Troika: Varoufakis wanted a write-down on the value of the Greek debt, and a smaller required budget surplus to service, to allow some room for Greece to start growing again. He theorised that only a credible threat to default on some Eurogroup bonds, and thus destabilise the currency, would lead to that agreement. By his account, the refusal to sign up to a third bailout depended on being willing to issue the threat. In the end, Tsipras refused to issue the threat (in his review of this book, journalist Paul Mason suggests Tsipras backed down rather than risk civil war).

Varoufakis hung on to his post, trying to carry through some of his other reforms to tax collection and public spending. Tsipras launched the famous Greek referendum, to which the people replied "Oxi!" to a third bailout. Varoufakis reveals that Syriza players were secretly hoping for a yes vote, enabling them to back down and accept the bailout. At that point, Varoufakis resigned.

The book is useful on revealing the state of international institutions and Greek banks. Here's how Varoufakis describes the deep corruption in Greek finance (worth quoting at length):

'Here's how our two bankers – let's call them Aris and Zorba – did it. Aris' family founded offshore companies, to which Zorba agreed secretly to lend without guarantees the millions that Aris' bank needed. Why such generosity towards a competitor? Because Aris and Zorba were sitting under the same proverbial oak. Desperate to raise money

for his own bank, Zorba agreed the loan on condition that Aris' bank lent a similar amount to Zorba's family's offshore outfits. Aris' and Zorba's families then used money from their offshore accounts to buy new shares in their own banks, thus fulfilling the regulator's requirements that new capital be raised and thereby qualifying for the real money that the poor taxpayer was borrowing from the troika.

...they ended up owing nothing to anyone. Both sets of loans ... were written off soon after being granted and transferred to the banks' long list of non-performing loans...

...An even more outrageous trick was employed: in addition to millions from Zorba's bank, the Aris family's offshore companies also borrowed millions from Aris' own bank. These loans were also written off as unserviceable or non-performing, or were used to buy office space that was resold to other parties only to be leased back by the bank or sold to it at inflated prices. The newly conjured up funds, or 'profits' would be used to buy new shares in the bank, keeping up the pretence that investors were injecting private capital into them.'

This is nothing less than institutional corruption and financial fraud. This, seemingly, didn't just apply to Greece, as executives at Barclays have recently been accused of a similar money-go-round with their bailout loan from Qatar.

Something similar happened with what the European Central Bank concocted to enable Greece to make a €3.5 billion repayment. It was literally a case of a central bank creating money, but money for the sake of money, nothing useful is bought with all this effort, except to the political right to keep Greece subservient to its creditors (of course, as is made clear above, this pretend money creation is only possible with the political connivance of the state's central bank which is the only type of bank that really can just issue as much money as it wants).

That is the central lesson of this book: Varoufakis' position would have been sensible in any business, but this wasn't business. It was politics. He recounts talking to Wolfgang Schäuble, the German Finance Minister and apparent Eminence grise of the Eurogroup, who seemed to believe that there was no alternative but to continue what he was doing, and impose extreme austerity on Greece. Varoufakis tells of how many people, individually, expressed sympathy, but in practice, stuck to the organisation line in any committee or in public. Interestingly, the only person to come out with praise

was Emanuel Macron, then working in the French finance ministry. He apparently backed Varoufakis' ideas, which may be significant for the coming years.

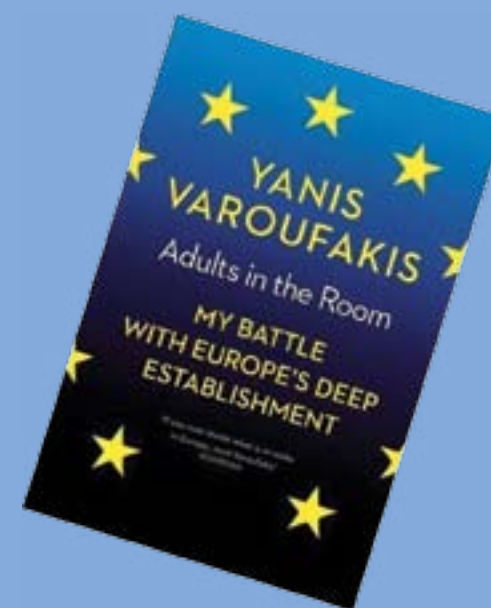
The need for the Eurogroup to have credibility internationally, to maintain the line that debts cannot be written down or off, that economic union, ultimately means political union to avoid such destabilisation, meant it had to pursue the only policy it had. In the end Syriza complied, after Greece was subject to a medieval siege that saw essential drug supplies cut off (including insulin and thyroxin) and a humanitarian crisis ensued.

Varoufakis describes how the institutions gave him the run-around: not letting him know who or where the decision-makers were; treating any speech by him as if they were listening to 'the

Swedish National Anthem'; and releasing misleading briefings to the press about events at meetings (there were no proper minutes, but Varoufakis recorded them secretly). The EU, he says, is likely to give Britain the same treatment during the Brexit talks.

His book is a warm and witty account of a period of significant turbulence in a country of 10 million, with a government prepared to try and stand up to the financial power structures of the world. It is also a story of their failure to achieve even limited reform and compassion for the people of Greece. What they were asking for hardly amounted to revolution, but was an attempt to shore up capitalism. Sometimes, the system just works against itself.

PIK SMEET



Mosul: The Horrors of War



In mid-July Mosul finally fell. After over a thousand days into the campaign against Islamic State, and after an urban battle that has lasted three months longer than the Battle of Stalingrad, the last stronghold of IS in Iraq was taken.

This was at enormous cost. Untold numbers of dead remain buried in the rubble of Mosul, one estimate is up to four thousand. And towards the end of the battle, reliable reports came in of over a hundred children dying of starvation. As Airwars, an organisation tracking the effects of the wars in Iraq and Syria report:

‘Thousands of Moslawis have credibly been reported killed since October 2016, with West Mosul in particular devastated. The Coalition alone says it fired 29,000 munitions into the city during the assault. Five times more civilians were reported killed in west Mosul versus the east of the city, Airwars tracking suggests – an indication of the ferocity of recent fighting’ (airwars.org).

Western Mosul has been destroyed. The numbers are prodigious: 3,000 IS fighters took on an army of over 150,000, including the elite of Iraq’s special forces. Paul Rogers, Professor of Peace Studies at Bradford University, wrote on *The Conversation* website:

‘...the elite Iraqi Counter Terror Service (or Golden Division) had sustained serious casualties and there were already fears that Mosul would turn out to be a pyrrhic victory, reducing the one force that the Iraqi government could depend on in any future civil war to a shadow of its former self” (theconversation.com.uk).

The final death toll among civilians will be hard to establish, but there are credible reports of around eight thousand deaths: caught in a combination of Coalition bombing, artillery and IS murdering those who tried to escape. The IS troops deliberately kept the civilian population hostage to hamper the Iraqi government forces and their allies. Even so, over 700,000 people have been displaced by the battle of Mosul, and most will have no home to return to.

The devastation caused by a tiny handful of fighters is a testament to the dangers and horrors of modern warfare. It raises the question of the longer term in Iraq. Even when east Mosul was cleared, reports came in of stay-behind cells carrying out attacks on the rear of the Iraqi forces: and it’s still not clear if the fall of the West of Mosul means the end of most of the IS fighters there, or if they have scattered, to carry on an irregular campaign. The weakening of the Iraqi special forces, and their reliance on Iran-backed Shia militias (much to the resentment of the mainly Sunni citizens of Mosul and its surrounds) means that anything approximating peace may well be a long way off.

A significant feature of this campaign has been the distortions of propaganda. The campaign in Mosul was almost identical to that waged by Bashar Al-Assad and his Russian ally in Aleppo: but the coverage was vastly different. Aleppo

was subject to daily reports of every bombing and allegations of continual brutality. Mosul only really entered the UK news as a footnote, or to mark a significant victory.

Given the undoubted brutality of IS, it would not have been difficult to try and justify the civilian deaths along the way: but silence was the main media response. Part of the difference is that BBC journalists were embedded with Iraqi forces, and so were showing their side of the story whenever they reported. Though the same sources of information on deaths in Mosul were available as were to be found in Aleppo, even massacres by IS did not make the mainstream news. The conclusion could be that it is thought that the public might not stomach the cost of pacifying Mosul (it’s worth noting in passing, that Fallujah has been similarly pacified three times, so even this phase of the story may not be the complete end). Another possibility is that the toll of civilian casualties is unpopular in the Arab world. Juan Cole on his blog notes that Sunni news sources have been focussing on civilian casualties (www.juancole.com/2017/07/declares-triumph-casualties.html).

There can be no doubt that IS were a particularly brutal and barbaric gang. As we have noted in these pages, the core of their structure was made up of experienced military officers, a fact which accounts for the difficulty in dislodging them from Mosul. These were not rag-tag amateurs, but schooled military professionals. Their slaughter of civilians was the cold ruthless logic of war. Their rule was equally as brutal as it was weak.

There are equally savage regimes in the region: Saudi Arabia, for example, is engaged in a prolonged war with rebels in Yemen that is seeing misery piled upon misery, and not content with that, it has been laying siege to Qatar, for no other reason than regional rivalry. Its domestic record is also infamous. We are unlikely to see MPs in Parliament lining up to demand airstrikes on Saudi.

The reality is that the horrors of modern war are not to be laid on the shoulders of a religion nor an ideology, nor even on specific individuals. Fault and justification for destroying an entire city can always be found when military, political and economic needs demand it. IS tried to join the worldwide gang of killers that get their power from the barrel of a gun (and the guidance system of a missile).

The fact that the invasion of Iraq has led to city after city being crushed in prolonged urban warfare, shows the limits of the usefulness of warfare in achieving any political ends. The means of violence are abundant, cheap and easy to obtain, tiny groups can cause vast devastation, when they achieve the right levels of motivation. IS will continue to strike: its fighters have gained skills and attitudes that will see them spread across conflict zones the world over. Whether IS had any material link to recent attacks in Britain, they have shown a willingness to use terror for their propaganda purposes.

PIK SMEET

Whose Party Is It?

During the recent general election I heard several enthusiastic Labour Party supporters, when confronted with the war crimes of the last Labour government, state that Blair and ‘New Labour’ were never a part of the ‘real’ Labour movement. It struck me as a very weak defence of the Labour Party’s actions when in government as opposed to the promises they make whilst out of power. If one is to regard this statement as anything other than hypocritical then what does it say about the identity of any social organisation? Can we ever conveniently disregard the recent activities of a group that we support, or belong to, in the name of a desperate optimism that it ‘will be different next time’?

Despite the prediction that the ‘cyber age’ we live in will increasingly alienate us from each other socially we see a continuing need for people to join social groups of almost infinite variety: Sports clubs, support groups, literary societies, orchestras, bands, churches, pressure groups, historical re-enactment societies, etc. Then there are so-called ‘secret societies’ like the Freemasons, Illuminati, Knights of Pythias, Mafia etc. Somewhere between these two variants we find the political parties. What they all have in common is something we might call ‘factionalism’. This occurs when individuals within the group find themselves in disagreement with an element of the majority consensus and so gravitate toward each other, thus forming a faction within the movement. Despite being a minority within the group they can use certain justifications for opposing ‘from within’ the policies or even objectives of the majority in terms of a departure from authenticity or betrayed values. Some years ago I joined a literary society and found myself almost immediately in a minority when I attempted to defend the literary merits of science fiction. I was joined by another member and we found ourselves evangelising the genre at every opportunity (and not just because it was fun to bait the ‘high-brows’).

The question arises concerning the inevitability of dissension within any social grouping. Disentangling what might be thought of as justifiable ideological dissent from an egotistical power play is sometimes extremely difficult. Occasionally it may be purely a matter of individuals disliking each other, as happened in a philosophical group I occasionally attended when one ‘queen bee’ was displaced by another via a ‘coup d’état’. Many organisations have what might be described as authoritarian social structures where

individuals or groups acquire, legitimately in terms of their rules, more power than other members which, also inevitably, leads to conflict. Given all of these internal pressures it is surprising that such groups survive at all (and, of course, many don’t) but if they do they



acquire a history which becomes a definitive element in terms of the group’s identity.

Political parties are ‘nothing but the expression of class interests’ according to Marx. We might modify this statement by adding that they are also the expression of perceived class interests which, in the case of the Labour Party, results in them acting directly against the interests of the class that they claim to represent. Once the reformist route to the establishment of socialism is taken class consciousness becomes blurred and eventually disappears entirely in the fruitless and endless struggle to control capitalism and make it beneficial for all within the community. But this anti-revolutionary (and so therefore anti-socialist) dogma and its persistent failures seem immune to a logical critique especially when the working class are confronted by the realities of the morally and socially degenerate Tory Party.

Of course the Conservative Party is also divided by factionalism which, together with the other elements already mentioned, is driven by the same misconceptions that are present in Labour; ignorance of how capitalism, stripped of its ideological mythology, actually operates in reality. It is a great irony that only its great enemy (Marxism) has a clear understanding of capitalism. Given all of these pressures and divisions it has become a necessity that the Labour Party, in particular, must deny its own history; a clear example of this is the attempt to disassociate itself from New Labour and the warmonger Tony Blair. That this can be done is testament to the power of ideology (the need to believe) which has enabled such Leftist idiocies as the support of Bolshevism and even for the likes of Stalin in the past. How then, one might ask, does any political party avoid the consequences of the internal social dynamics outlined above?

The Socialist Party has built-in structures specifically designed to counteract the tendencies we have defined. We are the only political party to insist on an ‘entrance test’ so we can be certain that any prospective member has a sound understanding of our political analysis and the actions that this implies. That we do this also emphasises our rejection of elitism because our case relies on the belief that fundamental political consciousness is available to all and not just a minority. We have no leaders or group of mandarins to ‘guide us’. Every important action is subject to democratic debate and vote. Above all we demand of ourselves and each other that we constantly critically review what is believed to be true, so avoiding the intellectual dead-end of ideological dogma. These are the building blocks of a revolutionary socialist organisation which contrasts starkly with the idealism and elitism continually expressed by the Left and the so-called ‘labour movement’ with their ‘behind closed doors’ deals and compromises.

Has the Socialist Party ever experienced serious internal dissent in its over one hundred year existence? There have been the same sort of factionalist pressures as in other organisations but the very fact of our continued existence together with the consistency of our analysis and values illustrates the strength of a thoroughly democratic organisation that restricts membership to those who share its revolutionary perspective; our political structure and the coherence of our case has meant that the attempted subversion or hijacking of our revolutionary identity has always failed. The possibility that we would ever have to deny our own history (which, after all, is an essential element in any group’s identity) is as ludicrous as an individual denying responsibility for his actions on the basis that he promises to do better next time.

WEZ



Flaming Forests

High temperatures and heat-waves are spreading like...wild-fires.

Recently extreme hot weather of 40 degrees Celsius in Portugal resulted in a devastating forest fire in the Pedrogao Grande region, some 150 kilometres north-east of Lisbon, leaving scores dead and many more injured. Early this year, firefighters died battling some of the worst forest fires to hit Chile in half a century. In both countries the natural compositions of their forests had been changed for the sole commercial purpose of exportation of timber and wood-pulp with the planting of eucalyptus and pine trees, known for their enormous thirst for water. Capitalism has always placed profit before people, and it always will. The timber industry has contributed to the destruction of native forests and its habitat. The state is at the service of capital, at the service of forestry companies that have only benefited a small group of individuals. Yet the responsibility ultimately lies with those who keep voting for capitalist politicians.

There have also been numerous big fires in various other places around the world and in increasing numbers where typically there used not to be large-scale wildfires.

Forest fires aren't always necessarily bad and sometimes beneficial to the forest ecosystem for them to stay healthy. But this unnatural increase where entire forests burn down uncontrollably is bad for the environment and a risk not just to human life but also detrimental to human health.

According to the Union of Concerned Scientists, every state in the western US has experienced an increase in the average annual number of large wildfires over past decades. 2015 was a record-breaking year in the US, with more than 10 million acres burned. That's about an area the size of the Netherlands or Switzerland. Large forest fires in the western US have been occurring nearly five times more often since the 1970s and 80s. Such fires are burning more than six times the land area as before, and lasting almost five times longer. The wildfire season has universally become longer over the past 40 years. There is very well-documented scientific evidence that climate change has been increasing the length of the fire season, the size of the area burned each year and the number of wildfires. Prevailing climate conditions have become warmer and drier due to global warming from greenhouse emissions and this enhances the likelihood of forest fires.

The winters are shorter and warmer.

The summers are hotter and drier. Human-caused warming makes forests more susceptible to burning. Record heat has increased evaporation and dried-out the soil and tinder-dry vegetation will set forests ablaze. Worldwide, droughts associated with climate change are causing increasingly unnatural forest conditions leading to forest fires in a way never seen before.

The situation is a direct result of unplanned and unrestrained industrial growth and an economic dependence on fossil fuels. It is crucial to understand that climate change/global warming has contributed to the higher temperatures. Our choice is between capitalism and its environmental destruction or building a healthy socialist planet. Socialism will place the resources of the world in the hands of the people. Until the capitalist is removed from the management of natural resources, we can only expect that the antagonism between human society and nature will continue with mounting tragic consequences. What we are witnessing is the impact of capitalism throughout the world and humanity needs a socialist society that has social control, where production is for use and not for profit. The capitalist system is working against the interests of humankind.

ALJO

associated what socialists now too call 'capitalism' with production rather than finance (or commerce).

Money capital, as a sum of money used to make more money, existed before the coming of the 'capitalist mode of production'. It took the forms of money-lending and of money being advanced to buy goods in some distant market and to transport and sell them in a nearer market at a profit. In neither case was money invested in the actual production of goods.

Capitalism, in the Marxist sense, only came into existence when money was directly invested in production with the aim of selling what was produced and ending up with more money than originally. Marx analysed this profit as not originating, like that of the pre-capitalist merchants, in the market, in Ridley's 'commerce', but in production. Its source was the unpaid labour of the wage workers employed to produce the goods.

In the capitalist mode of production, a capitalist is someone who invests capital in production, not finance. That capitalist might have borrowed the money. If so, the interest they had to pay on it would come out of the profits they made from exploiting wage-labour; it, too, would have its origin in the surplus value created by the producers.

For Marx, a capitalist was not a mere financier but someone who directly employed wage-labour, typically in his day a mill or factory owner. These days those who champion their interests talk of them as being 'entrepreneurs'.

Ridley claims that these entrepreneurs take risks 'on behalf of consumers'. Really? Investing money in production for sale on a market with a view to profit does involve the risk that in the end you might not make a profit. But this risk is taken on behalf of the shareholders, not the consumers who make up the market. The capitalist entrepreneurs (these days, 'big' enterprises 'with massive investments' rather than the innovating individuals Ridley suggests) do have to be supplying what people want and can afford to pay for, but it is to make a profit not to satisfy a want that they risk investing the money.

In any event, what sort of economic system is it where a risk has to be taken to meet people's needs? The rational aim of production is to turn out what the population needs, not to make a profit out of providing for those needs that can be paid for. If a productive system really was geared to meeting needs, then it would do so directly without having to pass via detours such as money capital and entrepreneurs. Capitalism fails that test.



Home Truths

OVER 11 million people in Britain live in rented accommodation, mostly owned by private landlords, as opposed to Registered Social Landlords (councils and housing associations). The two kinds of landlord differ in the way their organisations are structured. RSLs don't have shareholders to swallow up profits, so any surplus from rents collected is supposed to be re-invested into maintaining properties and building more social housing. The rents which RSLs charge are shaped by government, with the aim that they are more affordable to people on lower incomes. Private landlords are individuals who own the properties they rent, so they can choose the amount they charge and wait for the profits to land directly into their bank accounts. The terms of a tenancy agreement may or may not differ much between the private sector and social housing, depending on how closely the landlord sticks to the law and accepted practice. Consequently, renting from the private sector often involves even less security and shoddier properties than with RSLs. While many private landlords live in luxury bespoke villas, their tenants struggle to afford cramped flats with damp walls. How would these landlords react to having to live in the conditions that their tenants endure?

We find out in *The Week The Landlords Moved In* (BBC1), another one of those 'switching lifestyle' reality TV programmes, the offspring of *Wife Swap* and *Undercover Boss*. Each episode follows two landlords who move in to one of their own properties for a week and manage on the same income as their tenants, who temporarily move to other accommodation.

The participating landlords include a father and son who own properties worth £7million in London and the commuter belt which bring them £15,000 a month

profit. Another has 80 properties which draw in £30-£40,000 rent each month. Two young entrepreneurs boast that they earn £750 an hour, and talk of people and property as 'investment vehicles'. All the landlords are open about being in the property business to rake in the dosh, with 'buy low, rent high' and 'let it and forget it' as business models. One cannily realises that for him, the housing crisis is an opportunity. With lots of people looking for fewer properties, private landlords can pick which new tenants can pay the highest rents, boosting their profits.

The properties they rent out include a two bedroom flat on the London / Essex border for £950 a month, £575 for a room and communal kitchen in Milton Keynes, and £450 a month for a two bedroom flat in County Durham. Mould is often thrown in at no extra cost, and many flats have unique features such as peeling paint on bathroom tiles and electric meters shared with the neighbour. Fixtures and fittings may not be fixed and fitted. Some of the tenants lack the confidence to report repairs or problems, worried about being evicted if they are seen to be awkward. Many live in fear of having to move out if the rents increase beyond their means. They have often learnt to manage without things like adequate money, heating, storage space and working appliances, things which the landlords take for granted. So, when the landlords move into their own substandard rented accommodation, it comes as a shock. Living on less than £100 disposable income for the week is another eye-opener for those used to ten times that much.

Living as tenants gives the landlords some much-needed empathy. One tearfully (and belatedly) comes to understand that he's responsible for someone else's living conditions. Another realises that he should be looking at the properties not through their 'functionality' but as homes

for people. After the week is over, many of the tenants return to renovated and redecorated rooms and assurances that the properties will be maintained better in future. The landlords' previous reluctance to re-invest much of their profits back into maintenance shows how the profit motive leads to greed and a poor quality service.

The Week The Landlords Moved In illustrates the alienation that the housing system engineers between people. Landlords are distanced from their tenants not only through their differing legal rights to the property, but also through the differences in their wealth. Their relationship is financial and bureaucratic, rather than co-operative and on an equal basis. We've learnt to accept as normal the notion of someone else owning and having control over where we live. And of course it is a normal, integral part of the system. But consequently, our homes don't often have the security and comfort that they should provide. Paying a mortgage to buy our home doesn't necessarily give where we live more stability, either, as then we're financially tied to a bank instead of a landlord. And this option isn't realistic for anyone unable to pull together the thousands of pounds needed for a deposit and solicitor's fees. Capitalism turns where we live into a commodity, which shapes the way we relate to our homes. For the millions of people surviving on a low income, lacking the money (and the right) to make improvements, home doesn't always feel like home. For the landlords, houses are likely to be seen just as sources of income, at least until a TV programme makes them think twice.

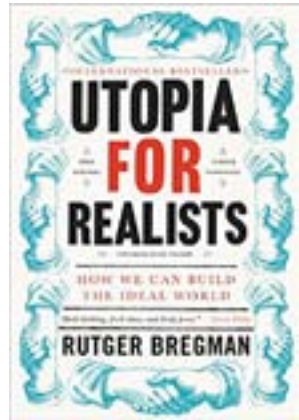
MIKE FOSTER



Boo to capitalism

WRITING IN the Times (3 July) mad marketeer Matt Ridley complained: "Capitalism" was a word largely invented by the opponents of commerce. The socialist Louis Blanc first used it in its modern sense in 1850, defining it as "the appropriation of capital by some to the exclusion of others." ("Capitalist" had been used much earlier.) Marx and Engels then made it into a proper "boo" word. Ever since, the left has used "capitalism" to imply that all free-market commerce is run by big financiers, with massive investments, rather than merchants and entrepreneurs taking risks on behalf of consumers and driving down prices.'

It is true that 'capitalism', following on from the use of 'capitalist' to mean someone with money capital, has been associated with 'big financiers, with massive investments'. It still is in populist and other non-socialist circles. But this was not Marx's usage. He didn't use the word itself, preferring to talk about the 'capitalist mode of production', a preference which shows that he



Demanding the Impossible

Utopia for Realists. By Rutger Bregman. Bloomsbury, 2017. £16.99

Bregman is a Dutch philosopher and he has produced a book that many are claiming is up there with Piketty in terms of recent works that have achieved real kudos and wide resonance among critics of the market economy.

In fairness, it is well-written and thought-provoking – definitely a cut above the many philosophical pot-boilers that wordily say little and invite being left on the ‘New Titles’ shelves at Waterstones. Bregman is good at sensing where the problems in modern day society are and how they have morphed over recent decades – the proliferation of ‘bullshit jobs’ from PR to the law, from public sector pen-pushers to private sector money-shufflers; the disconnection between the property-owning ideals of the free market nirvana, and the inability of people to secure their place within it; the massive rise in automation which counter-intuitively has led to people working longer and harder, and often with less purpose.

Where Bregman is less convincing is his prospectus for change. Most of the ideas he advances here are familiar ones – a basic income scheme, a move towards a 15 hour work week, open borders, increased taxes on wealth . . . in other words, a reversal of the dominant trends within capitalism over the last three or four decades that were promoted by Friedman, Hayek and their latter-day neo-liberal evangelists.

Bregman sees these as being radical and seemingly utopian demands that are capable of realisation in the way that other supposedly outlandish reforms were previously (he cites votes for women and same-sex marriage among others). But many – in fact, almost all – of the examples he gives of this nature were cultural changes that occurred within the market economy as it swept away the last vestiges of the attitudes that went alongside the feudal master/servant relationship. In other words, they were entirely compatible with

the development of capitalism itself. Capitalism’s economic laws are rather different and do not bend so easily to the political will of those who would seek to curb their seeming excesses – the tendency towards an increasing work week in recent decades being a case in point.

That’s why Bregman’s book title is misplaced – his prospectus for change isn’t really Utopia for Realists but Utopia for Utopians. This is because the reason capitalism hasn’t delivered what many radicals have expected over the years is that in many ways it can’t. For instance, a basic income scheme is capable of realisation within capitalism only within certain parameters but these are circumscribed by the profit system and the need for the driving force of capitalism to operate – businesses competing to accumulate capital without the state interfering to prevent this. At a higher level of technological advancement this applies to basic income schemes today just as it did the original Speenhamland system and the Poor Law in nineteenth century Britain. Within the market economy, these schemes are unable to abolish poverty – in capitalism, the rich are rich because the poor are poor, and wealth accumulates to those that have it and only expands on this basis. In anything other than the very short-term, capitalism is incapable of behaving any other way.

The fact that until comparatively recent times the working class of wage and salary earners were often able to increase their absolute levels of income (and sometimes their relative share of income for a time) was the product of organised trade union action, but there were always limits to this. That the average skilled US worker hasn’t seen an increase in their real wages for around 30 years and that most workers in the UK and many other European countries have had real pay cuts for over a decade now illustrates this point well enough.

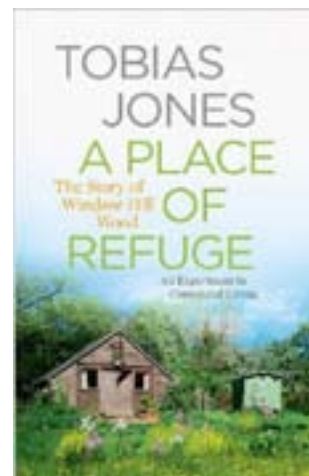
Capitalism has economic laws that are not easily transcended within the system (as has been illustrated by reformist governments of the Labour variety and also by more radical interventions such as the creation of centralised state-run capitalism in Russia and its satellites in the twentieth century). So what is needed is the sort of movement that Bregman identifies – radical, democratic, confident in its ideas – but one genuinely focused on challenging capitalism at source and creating a society capable of realising the potential that the market economy has unleashed. As Bregman himself rightly says:

‘A worldview is not a Lego set where a block is added here, removed there. It’s a fortress that is defended tooth and nail, with all possible reinforcements,

until the pressure becomes so overpowering the walls cave in’ (p.240).

Capitalism, with its interconnected production across the globe, its robots, 3-D printing and digital media, has brought about a real potential abundance of wealth that is now held back by the artificial scarcity associated with the market, money and production for profit. A genuine society of abundance will have no time for basic income schemes and attempts to institute part-time wage-slavery, and will instead mean a conscious move towards full unemployment and zero money income instead – only achievable on the basis of common ownership, the abolition of the market and free access to wealth.

DAP



Every form of refuge has its price

Tobias Jones: A Place of Refuge: an Experiment in Communal Living. riverrun £9.99.

This is an account of a ‘woodland sanctuary’ near Shepton Mallet in Somerset, set up by Jones and his wife Francesca ‘with the sole purpose of offering refuge to people going through a period of crisis in their lives’ (see also www.windsorhillwood.co.uk). It was inhabited by them, their two (later three) children and usually up to five other people. In the first two and a half years, over fifty people stayed there for varying lengths of time. The other residents had various kinds of problem, such as addiction to alcohol or drugs, or a past history of abuse, or were ex-soldiers who had endured terrible experiences in Afghanistan and were suffering

from post-traumatic stress disorder. The book is an honest (sometimes painfully honest) report of the trials and tribulations involved, the effect on Jones himself of listening to so much trauma, and what was achieved.

The set-up had a religious inspiration, though not much is in fact made of this. It was supported financially by Jones’ own income (from journalism and other writing), equal contributions from the other residents, donations from supporters and the sale of various goods produced on the site. A natural question to ask is whether the experience has any lessons for Socialists, though it should be borne in mind that the other residents, with their problematic backgrounds, were by no means a cross-section of the population.

Partly because of residents’ histories, no alcohol or drugs were allowed on-site, nor was any violence permitted. It was mainly the Jones adults who decided what was allowed (it was their home, after all), and in the second year a management committee of outsiders was set up to offer advice. The result was not a harmonious paradise where everyone chipped in as they could and took what they needed, but nor was it a place where people did the minimum they could get away with and just enjoyed themselves. Volunteers from outside came one day a week to look around and help out. Most exchanges with the local community were non-monetary, such as providing a cup of tea and a slice of cake in exchange for an oil drum. Internally there was no concept of a wage.

Some quotes will give an idea of how it all worked out in practice: a few people ‘took everything they could without any idea of where it was coming from’, while others ‘were here for what they could get, not what they could give’. Yet most residents ‘don’t want to be helped; they want to help out’ and ‘Far more of our guests work too hard than not enough’ and in many ways ‘everyone benefited from communal life’. The wood ‘has, in fact, usually been a cheerful and harmonious place’.

Windsor Hill Wood is not a little piece of socialism in Somerset, but Jones’ book provides a refreshing insight into both the difficulties and benefits of one form of communal life.

PB

Exhibition Review



1917: Romanovs and Revolution

Hermitage Amsterdam is a branch of the massive State Hermitage Museum in St Petersburg, and mainly displays works from its parent museum. This centenary year sees an exhibition ‘1917: Romanovs and Revolution’, which continues till mid-September. As might be expected, there is a lot of emphasis on Tsar Nicholas II, his family and his own political and military weaknesses and miscalculations. There are display panels, newsreels, paintings, original documents and historic objects (such as one of the swords used to execute the royal family).

For the rich and powerful, St Petersburg in the nineteenth century was a luxurious city, with shopping arcades and Art Nouveau-influenced designs, so it was culturally part of Europe. But the rest of Russia, with its vast impoverished peasant population, was completely different. The Russian press was tightly censored and it was left to poets and novelists to express new social and political ideas, often at risk to themselves; Dostoyevsky spent ten years in Siberia from 1849.

Newspapers were forbidden to mention the deaths of hundreds of people in a crowd disturbance and stampede at Khodynka a few days after the Tsar’s coronation in 1896. Over a hundred demonstrators were shot on Bloody Sunday in 1905; the Tsar and government responded with an anti-semitic campaign.

The First World War saw the Winter Palace used as a military hospital; and the Fabergé company shifted from making expensive jewellery to manufacturing army and medical equipment for the war.

The February Revolution was initially sparked by protests on International Women’s Day, and led fairly quickly to the Tsar’s abdication, after which his family were imprisoned and eventually executed in July 1918; recent research has identified bodies discovered in the area as those of the Tsar and his family. The exhibition has relatively little material on the Bolsheviks and their takeover of power. There is a reference to ‘Marxism-Leninism’ and an astonishing claim that Lenin’s ideas were ‘far more radical’ than those of Marx, but there is no explanation of what this is supposed to mean, let alone any justification.

Also in Amsterdam, the Nieuwe Kerk was housing the 2017 World Press Photo exhibition, containing some unforgettable and tragic images, mostly of war and refugees. It closed on 9 July, but it will be displayed in many other locations, including the Scottish Parliament building in Edinburgh from 4 to 26 August. Or look at www.worldpressphoto.org to see many of the photos.

PB

50 Years Ago

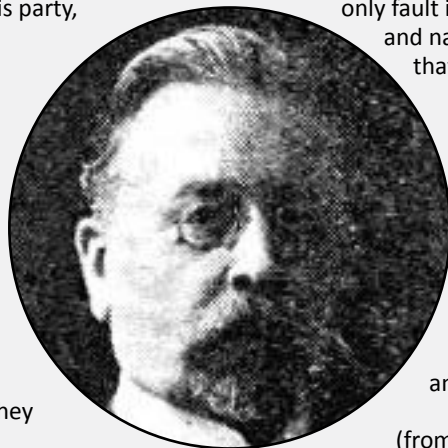
Konni Zilliacus

Konni Zilliacus, who died last month, was the Left winger to end all Left wingers. The only man who was in step; the persistent thorn in his leaders’ sides; Labour’s unsleeping conscience. So they said.

Zilliacus had many disagreements with his party, especially on its foreign policy. He was one of those Labour M.P.s who found to their astonishment after the victory in 1945 that Bevin handled foreign affairs very much as they had expected a Tory Foreign Secretary to.

He was in almost all the rebel movements and eventually he paid for this, with expulsion. What Wilson has called “dog licences” were as necessary then as they are now; Zilliacus could not get back into Parliament until he had given the Labour leadership the necessary assurances about his future conduct, and they had accepted him into the fold once more.

Zilliacus was a prime example of what are called honest politicians. Perhaps we can accept this—although he



never took his disagreements with Labour to the extent of resigning, nor did he come back on his own terms—but the fact is that such men are dangerous.

The so-called Left wingers encourage the idea that there is nothing fundamentally wrong with the Labour Party, that its only fault is a temporary deviation from the straight and narrow path, that a change of leadership is all that is needed to put everything right again.

No one will ever know how many futile votes this idea has won for Labour. No one will ever know the extent of the confusion and the cynicism it has caused.

What we do know is that the problems of capitalism are as acute as ever and that the political ignorance and apathy which supports the system is still there, encouraged by the Labour Party, by its members honest and dishonest, its leaders and its rebels.

(from ‘Review’, Socialist Standard, August 1967)

O Jeremy Corbyn



When Corbyn addressed the crowds at the Glastonbury festival and got a pop star’s reception, the media reported the crowds chanting ‘O Jeremy Corbyn’, in line with his newly-acquired cult status.

Hundreds of thousands of otherwise intelligent people regard him as a Leader who will improve things for them and are prepared to follow him on that basis. But leaders are not miracle-workers. They are prisoners of their followers and cannot go much beyond where these are prepared to go. They are also prisoners of objective conditions. No leader can make capitalism function in the interests of the many, as Corbyn’s followers imagine. In fact, if ever he did become Prime Minister, this would be a disaster for him.

Elected to office by the votes of followers who did want not socialism but only a capitalism reformed to put ‘people before profit’, Corbyn would not be able to reform capitalism to work for the many, let alone bring about socialism. He would have to resign himself to presiding over capitalism running on its terms, inevitably to the detriment of the many. ‘O Jeremy Corbyn’ would give way to ‘Corbyn, Out, Out, Out’.

A hundred or so years ago, in America, another working-class leader, Eugene Debs (who knew a great deal more about socialism than Corbyn), repudiated cult status by declaring:

‘I am not a Labor Leader; I do not want you to follow me or anyone else; if you are looking for a Moses to lead you out of this capitalist wilderness, you will stay right where you are. I would not lead you into the promised land if I could, because if I led you in, someone else would lead you out. You must use your heads as well as your hands, and get yourself out of your present condition; as it is now the capitalists use your heads and your hand.’ (Speech in Detroit, 1906).

Socialism cannot be established by people following some leader. It can only be established by people who want and understand it and participate in bringing it into being and making it work. As socialism involves people willingly and democratically cooperating to run things, it can only be established by people prepared to do this, not by sheep who have given up acting for themselves in order to follow a shepherd.

Meetings

AUGUST 2017

- CARDIFF

Saturday 5th August, 11am - 1pm

Street Stall

Queen Street (Newport Road end), Cardiff, CF10 2BJ
- CANTERBURY

Saturday 19th August, 12 noon

Street Stall

In the Parade pedestrian precinct, CT1 2JL

Phone 07971 715569 for more information
- DEAL

Bank Holiday Monday 28th August, 10am

Kent Miners’ Festival

The Socialist Party will have a stall and display

Betteshanger Community Park, Circular Road, Betteshanger, Nr Deal, CT14 0LT

Transport provided from Deal town centre

Phone 07971 715569 or visit [www/kentminersfestival.org.uk](http://www.kentminersfestival.org.uk)
- LONDON

Bank Holiday Monday 28 August 10am

Carshalton Environment Fair

The Socialist Party will have a stall 10.30 am - 5pm

Carshalton Park, Ruskin Road, Carshalton, SM5 3DD.

Declaration of Principles

- This declaration is the basis of our organisation and, because it is also an important historical document dating from the formation of the party in 1904, its original language has been retained.*
- Object**
- The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.**
- Declaration of Principles**
- The Socialist Party of Great Britain holds
1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e. land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.
 2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle between those who possess but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess.
 3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.
 4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.
 5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.
 6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organize consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.
 7. That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.
 8. The Socialist Party of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.

SEPTEMBER 2017

- CARDIFF

Saturday, 2nd September, 11am - 1pm

Street Stall

Queen Street (Newport Road end), Cardiff, CF10 2BJ
- CANTERBURY

Saturday, 16th September 12 noon

Street Stall

In the Parade pedestrian precinct, CT1 2JL

Phone 07971 715569 for more information
- EC Meeting**
- Saturday 5th August 2017, 1pm
- 52 Clapham High Street, London, SW4 7UN.
- Correspondence should be sent to the General Secretary. All articles, letters and notices should be sent to the Editorial Committee.

For full details of all our meetings and events see our **Meetup** site: <http://www.meetup.com/The-Socialist-Party-of-Great-Britain/>

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From cradle to grave

Given that there is one preventable child death every four seconds, the current media obsession with Charlie Gard, an 11-month-old baby with a fatal genetic disorder, is odd but perhaps unsurprising. Offers of help have come from far and wide, even above: the Pope has been in contact with the god responsible for all our suffering. Returning to reality, we read 'when doctors and nurses at the Vatican's showcase children's hospital complained in 2014 that corners were being cut and medical protocols ignored, the Vatican responded by ordering up a secret in-house investigation. The diagnosis: The original mission of "the pope's hospital" had been lost and was "today more aimed at profit than on caring for children"' (washingtonpost.com, 3 July).

The lot of workers towards the end of their adult lives is also bleak: 'one in three nursing homes "not safe". Inspectors failed more than a third of England's 4,000 nursing homes on safety, says the Care Quality Commission watchdog, adding that the findings from its new, tougher inspection system were "completely unacceptable". Failures included errors with medication, a lack of staff and patients not getting enough to eat and drink' (theweek.co.uk, 6 July).

The reformist seesaw

'As rallies across the country have demanded an increase in the minimum wage to \$15 per hour, one state is reducing its legal lowest rate. Missouri is rolling back its minimum wage from \$10 to \$7.70. Missouri Gov. Eric Greitens, in office since January, is allowing a bill passed by the Republican-controlled state legislature to become law on Aug. 28 without his signature' (dailycaller.com, 6 July). Over 150 years ago Marx wrote: "instead of the conservative motto, A fair day's wage for a fair day's work, we must inscribe on our banner the revolutionary watchword, Abolition of the wage system' (*Value, Price, and Profit*). Workers of the world wake up!

Zombies of the world unite!

The G20 summit took place recently in Hamburg alongside an imaginative protest by hundreds of zombies calling for us to 'wake up!' 'The mud-crusted zombie figures were meant to be a symbol for "a society that has lost faith in solidarity and in which the individual struggles only for his own advance," according to 1000 Gestalten's official website. The act of shedding these costumes during the performance signified the idea that change can start with just one person. "We cannot wait for change to emerge from the world's most powerful people, but we must now show all of us politically and socially responsible," a speaker of the collective declared in an official statement' (popsugar.com, 6 July). Correct. The revolutionary change that socialists strive for cannot come from above, from leaders, but only as a result of the majority understanding the need for and acting to bring about a world of free access and production for use.

Oh No...Not Again!

'The long struggle for pro-independence groups to separate Biafra from Nigeria is gathering pace, 50 years after a brutal civil war over a secessionist rebellion. Now, it's mainly young activists from southeastern Nigeria, also known as Igboland, that are demanding separation' (aljazeera.com, 5 July). The war lasted over two and a half years and more than one million people lost their lives. The Socialist Party did not support either side, holding that the peasant farmers and workers had no interest in the capitalist rivalries within Nigeria over the control of oil production or the bloody intervention of France, the Soviet Union and United Kingdom, amongst others.

Pissing off patriots

'Emily Lance received online threats of murder and rape after posting the video during Independence Day celebrations... Ms Lance is seen standing over a toilet on which a US flag is draped, and urinating on it with the aid of a device that allows women to do so standing up. She captioned it with: "F*** your nationalism. F*** your country. F*** your stupid f***** flag"' (bbc.com, 6 July). This woman is correct. Nationalism and attendant flag waving/worship are barriers to the establishment of a stateless world commonwealth. Workers create all the wealth in the world, but do so for the benefit of a tiny class of parasites. In the USA, the top 0.1 percent of the population has as much wealth as the bottom 90 percent. Lance concludes: 'What don't you people understand? You're celebrating freedom while damning me for doing the same. You can't have it both ways.'

